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GENERAL DISCUSSION OF WATER WORKS TOPICS

PRESIDENT THOMAS: On the question of whether there is any set charge for fire service, Mr. Blauvelt might know whether there is any fixed practice in that regard or not. Down our way we do not make a charge for such service. What do you say, Mr. Blauvelt?

MR. ALBERT BLAUVELT: Usually privately owned water works charge for fire service. Publicly owned do not, although it is strange that they do not, because it is a service that costs money and some one has to pay for it.

PRESIDENT THOMAS: But there are very few publicly owned water works that have a specific charge at a fixed rate.

MR. ALBERT BLAUVELT: Yes, sir, but it is a good and valuable service or the property owner would not want it. It saves him investment in something else that would take its place. Mr. Metcalf has been making a study as to the propriety of the charge.

PENALTIES FOR NON-PAYMENT OF WATER BILLS

MR. GEORGE A. MAIN: We have had the question of penalties for non-payment of water bills up for some little time, and would like to get any information as to court decisions regarding penalties for non-payment at prescribed times. We are charging 50 cents penalty if the bill is not paid by the tenth of the following month, and it is claimed by some that this is usury. Has any member had any experience or decision that can be used to assure the Board of Public Works of Daytona that we are doing right? We do not like the idea of shutting the water off without sending a second statement. Our plan has been if the bill is not paid on the tenth, to send a second statement on the eleventh which will include 50 cents additional; and if not paid on the thirtieth, the water is turned off. If this question has ever been thrashed out in the courts we would appreciate some information concerning it.

PRESIDENT THOMAS: Can anybody here give any information regarding that matter, or does any one know whether there are any legal decisions as to the propriety of exacting a penalty for failing to pay water bills on time?

MR. LOUIS L. TRIBUS: New York City provides that its water rents in default are to be collected with taxes in arrears, and it exacts 7 per cent per annum as interest on defaulted payments beyond a certain date, and if not paid within a further specified period, it proceeds to sell the property. It becomes a lien on the property the same as other taxes; so it would seem that it is in the nature of a penalty that becomes enforceable by sale. The case referred to by the last speaker may be local.

MR. GEORGE A. MAIN: In some cases the amount exceeded the legal rate of interest, while the last speaker says they allow 7 per cent. That is 1 per cent more than their legal rate.

MR. R. F. JOHNSON: In our state we charge 5 per cent penalty after the tenth of the second month; for example, quarter from April 1 to July 1, if not paid on the tenth of May we charge 5 per cent penalty which becomes a lien on the property, and every once in a while when property is sold with back water rent due we notify the purchaser that there is a cloud on his title. We have no difficulty in collecting 5 per cent, with, however, a provision that there shall be no charge on this account less than 10 cents.

METERING WATER USED FOR CONSTRUCTION

MR. OSCAR BULKELEY: What is the general practice in regard to metering water used for construction purposes, such as paving streets and sewer back filling; whether meters are used; whether it is advisable to use them, and what is the maximum size preferable to use? We are thinking of limiting the size to one inch, because of the danger involved in the use of larger meters on fire hydrants. We have had a great deal of trouble from the misuse of metered fire hydrants.

MR. JOHN M. DIVEN: The ordinary demand is for three-fourths-inch connection with five-eighths-inch meter. Three-fourths-inch hose is ordinarily used for such work.

MR. OSCAR BULKELEY: The contractors are very anxious to have two or three-inch meters for filling tanks.

MR. JOHN M. DIVEN: One great difficulty in the use of meters for this kind of service is the danger of their being tampered with, as they are necessarily set in exposed places; to put them in substantial pits would be too expensive for temporary service.

MR. A. A. REIMER: Our practice has been to absolutely taboo the use of meters on that class of work. So far as the street work is concerned, where the meter might be placed on the hydrant we condemn it, because we place the hydrants there for one purpose and one only, namely, that of fire-fighting; and if you have a meter with the necessary fittings attached to the hydrant and a fire call comes in making it necessary to use that particular hydrant, you are up against it, and there is nothing but condemnation handed out to you for having the meter there and preventing the use of the hydrant.

When it comes to the use of meters on buildings in course of construction, that is a different question, but at the same time you are always running the risk of having the meter damaged by falling material, iron, wooden beams, etc.; and therefore the contractor should be required to put a strong construction around the meter to protect it. We have preferred to use the flat rate for all such demands until after the building is completed, then we set the meter and know that we are safe.

MR. OSCAR BULKELEY: That is what we were planning to do, to eliminate meter rates on construction work of that kind, particularly in the erection of houses; but how do you supply water to contractors on streets for back filling of trenches and pavement work?

MR. A. A. REIMER: We control all that work ourselves. We have a gang that we utilize for that class of work who know how to handle the hydrants, instead of putting them into the hands of men who do not know how to use them and who might put them out of business. We have a flushing gang that tend to that class of work, and we charge for the service. If the contractor is in a part of the city where he cannot get water except from the hydrants we use a Heim valve on the hydrant.